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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 9433
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 9128
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 4057
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0647
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 6379
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 5232
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 003654

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MFA AGAIN CONVOKES AMBASSADOR RE DRONE STRIKES

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Following press reports of an alleged U.S. drone strike November 19 against a target in Bannu, Northwest Frontier Province, Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir convoked Ambassador to issue a formal GOP protest. A clearly uncomfortable Bashir said that the strike "undermined our efforts against terrorism" and was conducted "with no prior intimation." This had created public anger and was difficult to explain to the Pakistani parliament. What was needed was a holistic strategy in addressing the militancy issue.

¶2. (C) Ambassador replied that she would convey the GOP's concern to Washington. She noted U.S. satisfaction at the increased level of U.S.-Pakistani military cooperation on the Afghan border, and Bashir agreed that recent reports were heartening in this regard. Bashir said the MFA would issue a formal press statement; upon exiting the MFA, TV camera crews called by the MFA documented the GOP taking us to task. However, Bashir, who has been in recent briefings by Ambassador and RAO regarding our strike policy, quickly moved on to more positive topics such as the November 17 Friends of Pakistan meeting and the proposed December 5 trilateral among PM Gilani, President Karzai and Turkish PM Erdogan in Ankara.

¶3. (SBU) With headlines like "Give U.S. an Inch and It'll Take a Mile," today's press highlighted what it believed was the first ever U.S. drone strike "70 kilometers deep" inside the "settled" areas of Pakistan. Almost without exception the media also noted that the strike killed Abdullah Azam al-Saudi, identified as a senior member of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network. Also reported killed were one Arab, two Turkmen and a local militant in the area of Janikhel, close to North Waziristan.

PATTERSON